NOTES ON OUR MEETING IN TORONTO

Most film projects in which several directors were involved have been compilations of individually-directed shorts--e.g., "Germany in Autumn", "9/11", "A Score for Women's Voices" (Sophie Bissonette's film, on which I worked, about the World March of Women). Films that were inter-woven tapestries of material provided by several directors seem to be a distinctively Canadian phenomenon--e.g., Arcand's "Comfort and Indifference" (about the referendum of 1980), Stephen Drolet's "Referendum, Take II", and Isacsson's "View from the Summit". (I worked on the last two.) The last three inter-woven films were all located in one city--Montreal--and were focussed on one particular event of a few days or weeks.

What we are undertaking now is something that has never been tried before: to make a film-tapestry of material provided by directors across the country over an extended period of time. But there is an urgent need now to try to do it, because this is a period in which the identity of Canada is being tested more severely by its belligerent neighbour to the south than any time since 1812. We have survived so far. We were able to resist Washington's pressure to join their invasion of Iraq. It was one of those rare times when a PQ government supported a position taken by the federal government. But will we be able to keep our distance and our identity if Washington continues its unilateral effort to control the world? How will we handle threats by the US to cut off Canada's access to their markets if we keep insisting that issues of peace and security be settled by the UN? If we can weave our different treatments of these questions into a film-tapestry of beauty and power, it will be quite a distinctive achievement, and maybe an indication that we still have a national identity worth keeping out of Washington's expanding orbit.

With this in mind, some of the suggestions made at the meeting for a working title were "We Stand on Guard" (Bonnie's idea), "Will Canada Stand?" (Wanda), and "Where Canada Stands" (Monique).

There was general agreement that the internet is playing a central role in what we are looking at, and that one way of dealing with it in the film would be to make a web-browser like Mike Jones one of the characters.

Suggestions made for things to view:
--a series on immigrants broadcast by CBC-TV last year (suggested by Bonnie).
--"Six Degrees of Separation", a feature film about being inter-connected (Bonnie)
--"Five from Vietnam", came out in 1967 (Aerlyn)
--"20/20 Vision" on the internet (Barbara)

Newcomers to the group: Barry Stevens from Toronto, and Gary Marcuse from Vancouver. (Could Betsy and Manfred please send me their e-mail addresses?)

Editors suggested: Suzo Shanks, Hanela Helm, Babalou Lemelin, Cathy Gulkin

Monique tells me that things went well at the meeting that she and Betsy had at the NFB on Thursday afternoon with Picard and Perlmuter, and somebody from the Toronto office. The NFBers had three suggestions: (1) prepare a bigger budget (really!), (2) add to our group a director from one of the ethnic minorities, and (3) find a film character representing a pro-US point of view. Any ideas who such a director and such a character might be?

Monique and Betsy will be working on a new budget this week, and will let us know shortly how much we can expect in the way of wages and cost coverages as we prepare the first draft of our script for the end of June.

2 May, 2003